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BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES

The Standard of Living among Workingmen's Families in New York City.

By ROBERT COIT CHAPIN. New York: Charities Publication Committee, 1909. 8vo, pp. xv+372. \$2.00.

The stages in the making of this book may be summarized briefly. A report on Standard of Living, by Frank Tucker, was presented to the New York State Conference of Charities and Corrections in November, 1906, and was followed by the appointment of a committee to report on the essentials and the cost of a normal standard of living in the cities and towns of the state.

A generous appropriation from the Russell Sage Foundation was made for the prosecution of the investigation and the results were presented in a preliminary report by Lee K. Frankel in November, 1907. The original schedules and tables were then restudied by the secretary, Robert C. Chapin, and his detailed analysis forms the body of the present publication. Eight appendices including historical and bibliographical material are by no means the least valuable and satisfactory part of the volume.

The book bears on the back of its binding the imprint *The Standard of Living in New York City*. The title-page discloses the subject as "The Standard of Living among Workingmen's Families in New York City." The reader next finds that this should read "391 families with incomes varying from \$400 to \$1,600" and further that the main attention is given to "318 families with incomes varying from \$600 to \$1,000." Even the term "workingmen" is not used in a very definite sense. Certainly the picture of a man working in overalls for a fixed daily wage becomes rather obscure when it is discovered that it must include ordinary civilian's clothes as well as the attire of a clergyman, a teacher, a barber, a bar-tender, a cook, and the uniforms of an elevatorman, a policeman, a motorman, a park employee, a turnkey, and a fireman.

The nationality affords another factor of great diversity, as it includes United States, Teutonic nations, Irish, Colored, Bohemian, Russian, Austro-Hungarian, Italian, and "others."

The reader who has kept up his faith in the possibility of determining the "standard of living" as he has pondered over the efforts of Eden, LePlay, Engel, Wright, Atwater, Booth, Rowntree, Forman, and More, wonders if he must not at last frankly admit that he is chasing a will-o'-the-wisp. But the spell is over him and he reads on, not in the least disheartened by the frequent and frank avowals that final conclusions cannot be reached on many of the points under consideration. The following extracts illustrate this point: "The number of cases is too small to warrant very confident assertions on this point" (p. 76); "It is not claimed that what is true of these families is true of all families similarly situated" (p. 29); "When classified into sub-groups, the numbers are often too small to make the average and percentage of any real significance" (p. 29); "It is obvious that expenditures for furniture must vary greatly and that the averages will be affected by the accidental inclusion or exclusion, in a

given group, of families that have had occasion to buy articles of considerable value" (p. 200).

A page and a half on the "Probable Accuracy of the Returns" (pp. 32, 33) close with the sentence: "the experience gained in the conduct of the present inquiry may perhaps do something toward making the next investigation more exact and comprehensive."

The objects of expenditure are classed under the heads of housing, car-fare, fuel and light, food, clothing, health, insurance, sundry minor items. Diagrams and statistical tables are presented with an elaboration which seems as exhaustive as it is interesting. The discussions show a sympathy and a knowledge which grip the reader's attention. Nevertheless one is conscious of an attempt pervading the whole painstaking study to make the modern social view of what living means conform to outworn economic doctrines, to interpret present-day ideals of normal living in static rather than in dynamic terms, to use the even now discarded concepts of physical science, rather than the more significant ones of biological science.

A few illustrations may be given. The standard of overcrowding adopted is an allowance of less than four rooms to a family or more than one and a half persons to a room. Can this standard be accepted as normal rather than usual—in other words be a standard at all? Is the term "standard" capable of so rigid a definition? What about the size of the rooms, the supply of light and air, facilities for cleanliness, conveniences for house-keeping, to say nothing of the size of the building and the number of people in it, of width and cleanliness of adjacent streets and alleys, of height of neighboring buildings, and the perhaps more remote but equally essential factor of nearness to schools and parks? If all these other conditions were favorable would not the arbitrary measure of room to person disappear as a standard and, if they were lacking, would any measure of room to person be seriously considered as adequate housing?

In a similar way, the conclusion that "families spending at the rate of twenty-two cents per man per day were not receiving enough food to maintain physical efficiency is quite too arbitrary to use as a so-called "standard." This is admitted by Dr. F. P. Underhill, the special expert in dietetics, who divides the data into two classes representing (1) families well nourished, and (2) those poorly nourished, using for comparison the older dietary standards which he describes as having a range for protein from 100 to 150 grams, of fat from 50 to 70 grams, of carbo-hydrate from 300 to 600 grams, and a fuel value of from 2,500 to 7,000 calories—a range of variation which it is difficult to make accord with the usual conception of a "standard" or for which to set a fixed cost. Dr. Underhill names some of the factors which must be taken into account in determining a rational dietary, viz., physical needs, not habits, availability, absorbability, economy and management, judicious buying. The conclusion reached is based on the prevailing but not-too-well-substantiated views of the amount of nutrients needed by a man of seventy kilos' body weight at moderate muscular work and, in the case of family budgets, the dietary needs of the women and children are estimated in terms of this man's need. Yet there seems no particular reason why this typical man should serve as a norm. Six food schedules are presented in detail. The men in these families are an American truck-driver, an American

expressman, a Russian carpenter, an Australian shipping-clerk, an Italian longshoreman, and an Italian printer. There is nothing to indicate whether these men are of the size and weight of the typical man of the "standard dietary," but it is quite probable that some of them are smaller. Moreover the amount of physical work done by them evidently varies greatly. The diet for an expressman and a shipping-clerk, a longshoreman and a printer should be very different in amount.

It seems worth while to make these criticisms in some detail, as there are indications that danger lurks in the path of the social investigator, if he thinks wrong living conditions can be measured by an arbitrary and uniform rule or that right living conditions may be estimated in the same way.

It remains now to point out, though with undue and seemingly unappreciative brevity, the real value and significance of the book. Attempting to express terms of living in exact statistical values as a basis, the study throws immense light on a large number of living conditions in New York City. The conditions which are in general true of these three hundred and ninety-one families are undoubtedly true of tens or even hundreds of thousands more in New York alone. Shall the civic spirit of our time tolerate such conditions? Is the matter of swelling rents, driving human beings into a kind of housing which should not be endured, a subject beyond public control? Are not health conditions, care of streets, public markets, education, parks, insurance plans, matters which claim consideration in our economic system as much as wages and capital? Let the story of the way people live be told over and over again, as this book tells it, in statistics, in standards, in pictures, in descriptions, until a new light dawns. Then other forces will come into play besides those which the book describes as the two jaws of the vise, viz., wages and prices, "which, contracting and relaxing, fix the possibilities of human well-being." The vise may be a fitting figure to use in this connection, but it is necessary to realize that back of the vise is the man to work it. Human society can control the forces which should serve it in living processes as well as in the material world.

MARION TALBOT

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

L'industrie américaine. By ACHILLE VIALATE. Paris: Felix Alcan, 1908. 8vo, pp. 492. Fr. 10.

Professor Viallate has furnished in this volume a useful review of the development of American industry, trade, and transportation from the earliest period of modern development down to the present. He divides the book into three main parts—the first, a historical review dealing with protectionism and industrial history from 1789 to 1905; the second, an analysis of conditions of work, modes of business organization, methods and routes of transportation, and modern modes of finance; the third, a discussion of American export business and of projects designed to develop such business, including the upbuilding of a merchant marine, the Panama canal, etc.

There is not much of interest to American readers in the historical portions of *L'industrie américaine*, the ground having been fully covered by writers who were closer to the facts and more fully imbued with the atmosphere of our